

COUNCIL ON HOUSING
Public Session
Huling Cove Community Building
Lewes, Delaware
April 14, 2010

Motions

- Approval of March 10, 2010 Minutes.
- Approval of Garrett House funding request.

Presentations

- Universal Design presentations by Al Rose and Russ Huxtable.

Important Dates

- MARC NAHRO Conference – May 3-5, 2010 – Doubletree Hotel Downtown – Wilmington, DE.
- May 5 – Loan Review Committee meeting.
- May 12 – Council meeting.

John Walker, Chair, called to order the Public session of the Council on Housing at 2:06 p.m. on March 10, 2010. In addition to Mr. Walker, the following Council members were present:

Pat Batchelor
Russ Huxtable
Hugh Leahy
Connie Louder

Ralph Peters
Ruth Sokolowski
Vincent White
Norma Zumsteg

The following Council member was absent and excused from the meeting:

Donna Mitchell

Also attending:

Lynda Blythe, Administrative Specialist III, Delaware State Housing Authority (DSHA)
Cindy Deakyne, Housing Asset Manager, DSHA
Jerry Jones, Housing Finance/Development Administrator, DSHA
H. James Loescher, Housing Project/Loan Manager, DSHA
Timothy McLaughlin, Deputy Director, DSHA

Guests present:

Joan Hensel, United Cerebral Palsy (UCP)
Leslie Holland, Delaware Housing Coalition
Lottie Lee, UCP
Bill McCool, UCP
Al Rose, Delaware Developmental Disabilities Council (DDC)
Steve Tull, DDC

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. White moved that the Minutes of March 10, 2010 be approved as written. Mr. Peters seconded the motion and the Minutes were unanimously approved.

DSHA REPORT

Mr. McLaughlin reported:

- New \$250 Million Bond Issue:
 - Announced March 22, 2010.
 - Provides bonds for DSHA's first time homebuyer's program.
 - Federal program helped DSHA to buy down rates.
 - Some of the issue will be used for new construction. \$85 million drawn to-date.
- Home Ownership Gap Program (HGAP)
 - Launched February 1, 2010.
 - \$1 million in funding.
 - Provides grants up to \$5,000 to aid households facing foreclosure and homelessness.
 - Funds must be disbursed by September 30, 2010.
 - 30 grants currently have been awarded and 41 are pending.
 - Clients being met in both Wilmington and Dover offices of DSHA.
- Bond Bill Hearing
 - Will be held Monday, April 26, 10:30 a.m. in Legislative Hall.
 - Has provided preservation funds for the past couple of years.
 - Mr. Ben Addi, DSHA Director, will give a presentation advocating \$4.5 million when the budget is voted on at the end of June.
 - The public and Council are urged to attend and present their comments at the meeting.
 - The Communication Committee to prepare Council's comments for the Bond Bill Committee.
 - Mr. Leahy and Mr. Walker to determine Council's representative for the hearing.

UNIVERSAL DESIGN PRESENTATION

Ms. Sokolowski stated the Housing Policy Committee has been following the Universal Design concept and introduced Mr. Rose who presented the advocates point of view:

- The Delaware Developmental Disabilities Council (DDC) was created to promote the use of Universal Design.
- A coalition of Universal Design advocates has proposed legislation requiring all single family, duplex, triplex and semi-detached publicly financed dwelling units be built with the basics of Universal Design.
 - The proposed legislation (copy attached) was distributed. However, the bill was being updated and not available at this time. Mr. Rose will provide the most current version, when available, to Mr. Heckles (DSHA Legislative and Policy Advisor).
- It is the intent of Universal Design to make more housing usable by more people at little or no extra cost.
- Federal legislation currently requires multi-family units built with federal money to have 5% of the units accessible.
- Advocates believe 100% of the houses built with public dollars should be accessible.
- Universal Design is becoming more viable as the population ages.
- Including Universal Design in initial construction would be much less costly than modifying an existing home.
- The Universal Design advocates will meet on April 15 with Representative Quinn Johnson, the sponsor of the Bill, to finalize the verbiage.

Mr. Rose also distributed the following handouts (copies attached) to further detail aspects of Universal Design:

- Draft legislation.
- Visitability vs. Livability.
- Universal Design vs. Traditional Building Features Cost Comparison (prepared by Mr. Tull).
- Building Concerns and Answers (created from a recent AARP Public Policy Institute report).
- CONCRETE CHANGE – Myths and Objects (prepared by a national housing advocacy organization).
- DDC Pamphlet.

Mr. White asked at what threshold of public financial assistance the proposed legislation would take effect. Mr. Rose replied there is no threshold at this time.

Ms. Sokolowski stated concerns had been raised as to marketability and cost to builders and consumers of adding the requirements and introduced Mr. Huxtable to present an affordable housing builder's viewpoint. Mr. Huxtable, using the attached handout, explained:

- No-profit building organizations are not necessarily opposed to Universal Design but would like more time to review and evaluate the design standards before they are implemented.
- Some of the elements should be incorporated into building standards but not via legislation.
- Modifications to current affordable housing floor plans could be as much as \$10,000.
- The increased cost would increase need for gap financing.
- If the legislation is passed, non-profit organizations would be put at a disadvantage compared to for-profit builders who would not be affected by the legislation.
- First-time homebuyers may not want to finance the additional cost.
- Larger sized homes cannot be built on the size of land currently available to builders.
- Reducing the size of rooms makes homes less attractive to young couples with families.
- Programs already exist to assist in making accessibility modifications to existing homes.

Mr. Peters, speaking on behalf of Sussex County Habitat for Humanity (SCHH), stated Habitat for Humanity International has already mandated some of the proposed changes and that SCHH's modification costs are considerably less than quoted by Mr. Huxtable. Mr. Peters agreed, however, due to the cost of land, smaller parcels are being purchased which cannot accommodate homes with larger footprints. Mr. Peters stated affordable homes should not be lost due to Universal Design requirements and would like waivers and exemptions or partial exemptions be provided if the land is too small. Mr. Peters concluded, however, that more lenders are requiring homes be built or awarding more points to homes built with more aspects of Universal Design. Mr. Rose stated the current bill does permit waivers.

Mr. Leahy asked if consideration was being made to insert Universal Design into building codes. Mr. Rose stated no, at this time it would have to be legislated.

Mr. Tull acquainted Council with his personal experience which has caused him to become a strong advocate for Universal Design.

Mr. McLaughlin stated DSHA generally does not take a public position on matters until legislation is further along in the process. Ms. Sokolowski suggested the topic be part of Council's annual report.

HDF STATEMENT REVIEW

Mr. Jones, using the attached handout, reported:

1. Seaford Apartments (line #127) – closed April 8th, construction will begin soon.
 2. UCP-Garrett House (line #128) – is being presented at this meeting.
1. HDF funding applications received in February:
 - The majority of requests were for gap financing.
 - April 7th - The Loan Review Committee held a preliminary review of the 14 applications received.
 - It is anticipated that five or six requests will be presented to Council in May.
 - The Loan Review Committee will finalize their recommendations at the May 5th meeting for presentation to Council on May 12th.

2. Low Income Housing Tax Credits:

- 12 applications requesting \$6.3 million in credits were received by the April 9th deadline.
- \$2.6 million is the anticipated amount of credits available.
- Staff is currently ranking all applications.
- Final ranking will be disclosed mid-June.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

LOAN REVIEW

Ms. Zumsteg reminded Council that the comments of the April 7th Loan Review Committee meeting had been provided to them prior to this meeting. It is the recommendation of the Committee, per Ms. Zumsteg, that the funding requested by Garrett House be approved. Ms. Batchelor moved that Resolution No. 400, providing the requested funding, be approved. Ms. Louder seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

Ms. Zumsteg asked if arrangements could be made for Council to visit Black Diamond Hope House in Smyrna. Mr. McLaughlin will look into making the arrangements.

Regarding the HDF funding requests, Ms. Zumsteg stated the committee anticipates funding approximately \$1 million during this round. The committee would like to receive more information as to how the process is going from both the applicant's and DSHA's point of view.

OPERATIONS COMMITTEE

Ms. Louder reported the Committee:

1. Is working on revisions to the By-Laws.
2. Will present, at the June 9th meeting, a slate of candidates for the annual election of officers (Chair and Vice-Chair) to be held at the July 14th meeting.

Ms. Louder suggested Council hold a workshop to discuss Universal Design. Mr. McLaughlin suggested the Housing Policy Committee review the issue and present their recommendation at the May Council meeting.

HOUSING POLICY COMMITTEE

Ms. Sokolowski reported:

1. DSHA will pay for Council's registrations to the MARC-NAHRO meeting to be held May 3-5, 2010 in Wilmington. Mr. McLaughlin will mail the meeting's details to Council.
2. The U.S. House Jobs Bill has been sent to the Senate and recommended that Council send a letter urging Senators to support the funding of the National Trust Fund. Mr. Heckles will draft a letter for the Committee to review.

COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

Mr. Leahy reported the Committee:

1. In conjunction with Mr. Heckles, is preparing a draft of the Annual Report.
2. Continues to review the current website and asked that members email their comments to him.
3. Will work on the Bond Bill Hearing comments which Ms. Zumsteg will present.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Walker suggested no meeting be held in either July or August. Council to discuss the idea at the May meeting.

Mr. Peters inquired if DSHA is recommending 'greener' conditions for building requirements. Mr. McLaughlin responded yes, as indicated by both the HDF and Tax Credit applications; also, DSHA currently is developing a loose partnership with the Sustainable Energy Utility, a spin-off of the Delaware Energy Office.

Action Items

- Mr. McLaughlin is to:
 1. Arrange tour of Black Diamond Hope House in Smyrna.
 2. Email details of MARCH-NAHRO conference to Council members.
- Mr. Heckles is to:
 1. Draft letter of support for the Bond Bill.
 2. Draft letter of support for the National Trust Fund.
 3. Obtain the most current version of the proposed Universal Design legislation and forward to the Housing Policy Committee.
- The Housing Policy Committee to review Universal Design and present recommendations at May meeting.

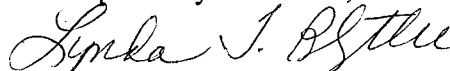
SCHEDULING OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held at 2:00 p.m. on May 12, 2010, in the Community Building at Liberty Court in Dover, DE.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion made by Mr. Peters, the meeting was adjourned at 3:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Lynda T. Blythe

Note: Copies of materials referenced as "attached" in these Minutes are available upon request.